

# PHYSICS MATH

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Austin, Texas, USA [jpcise@austincc.edu](mailto:jpcise@austincc.edu) & New York Times, 6/2/19 by Gregory Gibson

## A Gun Killed My Son. So Why Do I Want to Own One?

While fighting for stricter gun laws, I was always told I didn't understand. Maybe now I do. **TO BE CLEAR**, there was nothing I could've done to save him. It's just a fantasy that has been circling my brain in a holding pattern for decades — that somehow I could have intervened. On the evening of Dec. 14, 1992, a student armed with a semiautomatic rifle fired into the guard shack at the entrance to Bard College at Simon's Rock in Great Barrington, Mass., seriously wounding the guard stationed there. Moments later a car pulled up to the guard shack and the killer shot point-blank into the car's side window. The driver died instantly and the car ran off the road. Someone heard the noise and rushed into the college library to report the accident. **My son Galen, a sophomore at the college, rushed out the door to help. The shooter was waiting there, at the end of the sidewalk. Galen was hit twice; the chest shot was fatal. He staggered back into the library and died.** If my pistol and I had somehow been on the scene that night, no matter how highly trained we might've been, it's likely we'd have rushed out the door to see if we could render assistance in the reported auto accident. The killer would still have been there, and I'd have been shot instead of my son. Small comfort in that.

**MY SON'S KILLER** was a fellow student, a sophomore in the throes of a psychotic break. The administrators at Simon's Rock had seen the clearly labeled ammo package arrive in that morning's mail, and an anonymous call to a member of the staff warned that the killer had a gun and was planning to use it. But school shootings weren't seen as a national crisis in 1992; the dean and the administration hadn't been trained in active-shooter response because that body of knowledge didn't really exist back then. Those administrators were ill-equipped to prevent the shooting. I was so furious at their failure that I sued the college. But the painstaking process of legal discovery served also as a trek through the sources of my grief. Eventually I realized that there was no redemption in revenge. I made peace with the college and became involved in the gun-violence-prevention movement, sharing my story with anyone who would listen. My relationship with guns at that time was uncomplicated. I'd hunted as a kid and I'd received basic firearms training when I joined the Navy in 1967, but like many people in the liberal circles in which I traveled, I believed that guns were stupid and awful and that there was something fundamentally wrong with people who liked to use them. **However, after 20 years of advocacy I was beginning to realize that something else was fundamentally wrong. I had always assumed that once people heard firsthand of the misery that a gun had caused, they'd be motivated to support laws that would prevent such tragedies from happening to anyone else. I kept believing this, and I kept telling my story, and Columbine, Virginia Tech and Aurora kept happening. On Friday in Virginia Beach, a city worker killed at least 12 people.**

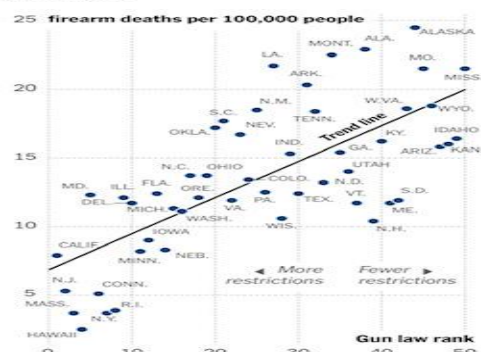
## Lax Laws, More Deaths

States with fewer gun restrictions had higher death rates from firearms. Most of the correlation is because of deaths from suicide, not homicide. Note: State gun law rank is a combination of the Giffords Law Center's Gun Law Scorecard rank and the Cato Institute's Freedom in the 50 States rank, a methodology based on an article from The Trace. Firearm mortality is from 2017.



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**INTRODUCTION:** Linear functions  $Y = mx + C$  are very common in basic Physics applications. In the graph at left  $Y =$  firearm deaths per 100,000 people.  $X =$  # gun law restrictions/state.  $C = Y$  intercept,  $m =$  slope of line.

**QUESTIONS:** (a) Using two points on the best fit line (Wash state & Why.) find  $\Delta Y$  &  $\Delta x$ ?, (b) Now find approximate slope ( $m$ ) of line?, (c) Find intercept  $C$ ?, (d) Find linear equation of this line?

**ANSWERS:** (a)  $\Delta Y = 8$  firearm deaths/100,000,  $\Delta X = 20$  gun restrictions/state, (b)  $0.4$  deaths/gun restriction, (c)  $C = 7$ , (d)  $Y = 0.4 X + 7$